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The Interaction between SpLD and NLP Techniques

*An evaluation of the role of Neuro-Linguistic Programming
in the field of Specific Learning Difficulties and education*

In this article I will evaluate some of the positive contributions that NLP has made not only to the educational performance of students with specific learning difficulties (SpLD) but also to their general personal development and well-being. I will also examine some of the reservations expressed by teachers on the use of NLP.

The time-frame for this article has been set within the period from 1986 to the present day, and includes the teaching of NLP on the National Teachers' Diploma Courses BDA (British Dyslexia Association) and RSA (Royal Society of Arts) and other NLP Workshops.

The current use of NLP

Although certain aspects of NLP have been introduced into the SpLD field by interested course tutors and lecturers, it would seem that its introduction into general teacher training has been limited. It has been successfully incorporated into the "alternative health industry" and sections of the business community, where its potential for producing desirable and quite tangible results has been grasped more readily, it would appear, than in the education sector.

A number of possible reasons for the limited response from the education sector merit consideration. Firstly, many teachers have not heard of NLP, and even those who have often perceive it as somewhat exclusive and inaccessible. This is to a degree under-

standable because, apart from general introductory NLP publications (such as *Frogs into Princes*), the more specifically educational titles are not readily available in bookshops.

In addition, most NLP titles are written for an American readership, and books which address class teachers have not been revised to take the English school system into account. This further distances the reader from what is already a rather unconventional presentation. Furthermore, although many teachers have their interest in NLP aroused by a fascinating though somewhat elusive lecture presentation, they often come away feeling the contents slipping through their fingers, because there is nothing specific for them to take away and use in school.

Finally, NLP can be a difficult topic to present to experienced teachers, who are often familiar with much of the underlying multidisciplinary philosophy and may resent being asked to re-examine some of their established routines and techniques. This is because many aspects of NLP practice (rapport building, pacing, leading, etc.) are generally accepted as the kind of good teaching practice that experienced teachers would carry out normally.

Two simple ways to ease the transition of NLP into education would be the production of a *Class Teacher's NLP Handbook*. This would address and relate topics to current issues and practice, and enable teachers to equip themselves with NLP approaches that are practical and relevant for use in group or individual situations within the framework of the National Curriculum. Secondly, it would also help if NLP concepts were introduced into initial teacher training programmes. This would be the appropriate area for implementing these approaches and is dependent on the availability of a suitable manual.